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Colored Waifs' Home Band, circa 1913, with Louis Armstrong (see arrow)
(Joe Mares Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University)

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Louis Armstrong and the Waifs' Home

By
Will Buckingham

"It sure was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. Me and music got married in the Home."¹

"The place seemed more like a health center, or a boarding school, than a boys' jail."²

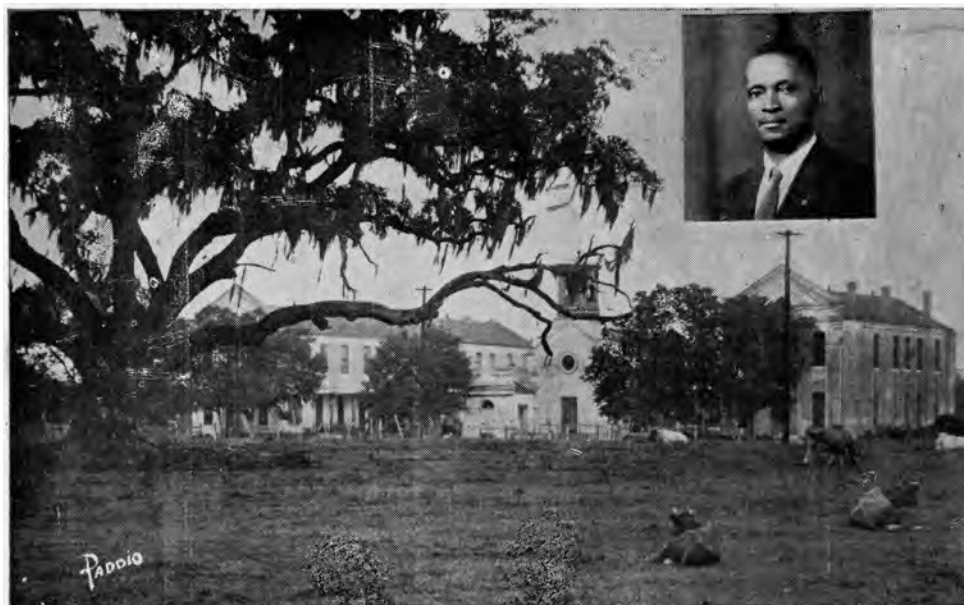
-Louis Armstrong referring to the Colored Waifs' Home for Boys

On December 31, 1912, Louis Armstrong was arrested for firing a pistol into the air and committed soon after to the Colored Waifs' Home for Boys. Armstrong entered the Home with virtually no musical training and left, cornet in hand, a capable professional musician. Armstrong received extensive formal musical training at the Home, and his experiences there played a substantial role in his early musical development.

The Colored Waifs' Home was founded and run by Captain Joseph Jones.³ Born in New Orleans on July 15, 1880, Jones attended the Marigny School, completed the eighth grade in 1898, and went on to complete the ninth grade at New Orleans University in 1899. Jones was a veteran of the Spanish-American War, the Philippine-American War, and World War I. He dedicated his life to serving the indigent black

youth of New Orleans: "just kids who never had a chance," as he described them. Praised by his colleagues as "probably the greatest Negro leader New Orleans ever had," Jones was a member of the Independent Order of the Goblins, an organization dedicated to "reducing delinquency" among black youths, and has the distinction of being the first African American to receive the key to the city of New Orleans, awarded by Mayor DeLessepp's Morrison upon Jones's retirement in 1951. Jones was the supervisor at the Waifs' Home from 1906 to 1926 and then of the Colored Division of the Milne Boys' Home, which combined with the Waifs' Home in 1926. David M. Dahlgren, the superintendent of the Milne Home, stated that Jones "has done more to prevent juvenile delinquency than any other one person in the city of New Orleans."⁴

In 1904, white juvenile offenders in



Post card view of Colored Waifs' Home Campus, with inset photo of Caption Jones.

New Orleans were committed to a reformatory home in lieu of prison sentences, but black offenders were sentenced to prison terms to be served among the adult prison population. There were six black juveniles in the Orleans Parish prison in 1904. Though their living quarters were separate from the adult population, the children were forced to share facilities and intermingle with adult inmates during the day. Jones observed this situation in 1906 and resolved to end the practice. He arranged with the juvenile court judge to have black youths sentenced to serve time in his reformatory school instead of prison. Initially, Jones took the children into his own home and paid out of pocket for many expenses. The Home was established in November of 1906, and by 1907 Jones had acquired a building and procured funding from the Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty to Children and the local black community, including lawyers, farmers, and philanthropists. The city offered an unused building at the intersection of Rosedale and Conti Streets; this represented the only public support for the Home at this time.⁵

The Waifs' Home was not the first or only orphanage for African Americans in New Orleans. The Catholic Indigent Orphan Institute was established in 1836 at Touro and Dauphine Streets by a former slave. An "elaborate" new building was funded by prominent black philanthropists and built in 1900. The Institute also operated as a day school.⁶

Major General Banks ordered the establishment of the Colored Asylum in neighboring Jefferson, Louisiana, in October 1863 in order to deal with the immediate emergency of the large number of homeless orphans in New Orleans during the Civil War. The institution housed 219 children in that year. In 1865 the orphanage was moved to the Soulé House, renamed either the "Colored Orphans' Home" or "the Asylum for Orphans of Freedmen," and put "under charge of Madame Louise D'Mortie." Louise De Mortie maintained the institution as a successful orphanage and school.⁷

Since as early as 1877, the Sisters of

the Holy Family ran the St. John Berchmans' Asylum at their convent on Orleans Avenue. By 1892 the orphanage was home to 69 girls. The orphanage and associated day school were held in high regard, and by 1911 the institution was home to 125 girls.⁸ The Sisters of the Holy Family also operated an orphanage for boys located on a farm on the outskirts of New Orleans on Gentilly Avenue. The boys "receive[d] the same care and attention as the orphan girl[s], and when able to perform field work [were] taught truck farming, making good and useful men who can go out in the world and earn a living."⁹ The Sisters of the Holy Family operated another boys' orphanage on St. Peter Street, which was established in 1893. A new orphanage was built on Metairie Road in 1908 and housed 62 boys who were transferred from the St. Peter Street facility.¹⁰

The Colored Industrial Home and School was founded in 1902 by Frances Joseph-Gaudet. It served as a boarding school for indigent youths. A review of contemporaneous newspaper articles suggests that the institution was plagued by financial problems, and public criticism of the institution was widespread and impassioned.¹¹

The Waifs' Home was outstanding among these institutions. From 1910 to 1913, it housed between 180 and 207 children.¹² Jones was successful in appropriating and managing funds for the Home. In addition to receiving government support, Jones focused his fund-raising efforts on well-off benefactors within the black community, as opposed to the broad and frantic appeals submitted to newspapers on behalf of the Colored Industrial Home and other institutions. Many of the Home's activities even turned a profit for the institution.

An April 12, 1918, *Times-Picayune* article recounts reporter Judith Neale's visit to the Home. A full page spread, the article includes photographs of the buildings and grounds, the vegetable garden, the boys striking poses, the choir, and the band. The tone of the article is one of glowing praise for the institution: "When little colored boys wander into mischief and

sometimes venture even into crime, they are not tossed up on humanity's scrap heap in New Orleans. They are taken over by the kindest friends and given the very best opportunity for development which ever came to them in all their lives. They pass from the court's custody into the care of real guardians. They see new faces, hear new words, learn new lessons, and learn to love a new life."

Daily life was ordered with strict military discipline: "The boys are mustered for play, for work, for everything by the call of the bugle. They are taught to drill, with the colors flying, and if they are not full-fledged patriots when they come to the home they are Eagle screamers after short residence there." Joseph Jones's wife related her husband's deep personal sense of patriotism, noting that the flag was raised and lowered daily by the boys to the sound of the bugle. Religion was also central to the lives of the boys. The 1918 newspaper feature emphasizes the Sunday religious services at the Home's chapel, and a photograph of the chapel is featured. Sunday schools from various churches took turns conducting services at the Home. These services often coincided with congregation-based fund-raising efforts for the Home.¹³

The vegetable garden, tended by the boys, was central to the Home's day-to-day function.¹⁴ In addition to feeding the boys and staff, surplus produce was sold, and tomatoes and other perishables were canned on the premises. Bulk supplies—presumably of products that were not produced on-site—were sent to the Home by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The garden represented a substantial source of revenue for the institution. For example, the Home sold

\$750 in cabbages in the first two months of 1918. Prize money from agricultural shows may have represented another source of income; the Home produced a number of prize-winning potatoes for the 1918 National Farm and Live Stock Show. Louis Armstrong recalled a Mr. Alexander, who taught gardening, carpentry, and "how to build camp fires." Mrs. Joseph Jones related that Mr. Alexander raised food for the Home, and Henry Alexander is identified in the 1918 newspaper article as assistant superintendent and gardener.¹⁵

The 1918 article includes a picture of a five-piece brass band and makes note of the "choir, chorus, and quartettes," praising the singing and describing the repertoire.¹⁶ These groups were a primary way through which the Home was represented in the community and provided another source of revenue for the





THE BOYS' BAND
ABOVE—NEGRO WAIFS' HOME OR CITY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL
FOR COLORED BOYS



AMERICAN FLAG—USED IN ALL DRILL, PRACTICE
TETTE
CENTER—HAPPY FARMER

This photospread accompanied reporter Judith Neale's 1918 *Times-Picayune* article, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs"

Home. They performed at events around the city, either for a fee or as

an incentive for benefactors of the Home. Louis Armstrong recalled playing at "private picnics" with the band and being hired "to play at white folks' picnic[s] at Spanish Fort near West End."¹⁷

The Home offered disenfranchised youths a safe place to learn valuable skills ranging from gardening and carpentry to music, vocational training, and formal schooling. Life

at the Waifs' Home was not easy. Louis Armstrong describes a diet consisting of white beans and little else—though the boys did receive candy for playing in the band. Some of the boys did not have shoes or adequate clothing. An appeal for donations in the January 9, 1914, issue of the *Times-Picayune* describes budget shortages and overcrowding at the Home, stating that "around Christmas time sixty [of the] boys . . . went without shoes and stockings, and their living quarters were without sufficient heat." Though it is difficult to make judgments about quality of life from this historical perspective, it seems that the benefits outweighed the hardships faced by the boys at the Home.¹⁸

The Waifs' Home is noteworthy for the musicians who received musical training there. Thomas Jefferson, who spent time at the Home, studied music, and played in the band there, gave an extensive list of musicians who learned music at the Home: Henry "Kid" Rena, "Kid Shots" Madison, George Lewis, Edgar Montanette, Edward Thompson, Clifford Thomson, Charles Peekannyyu, "Sonny," Georgie Boyd, "Old Man Coney," Mr. Dabio, Mr. Schnee, and others.¹⁹ Dave Bartholomew, Wilbert Tillman, William "Champion Jack"



Children and administrators of the Colored Waifs' Home, c. 1914. Captain Jones is kneeling in front of the group
(Courtesy Louisiana State Museum)

Dupre, Frank Lastie, Jeffrie Harris, Gus Canzan, Ikey Smooth, George Washington, James "Red Happy" Bolton, Henry Foster, James Brown, and Henry Maloney are among the other musicians who spent time at the Home and studied music with Peter Davis, the Home's music teacher and band director.²⁰

A January 2, 1913, article in the *Times-Democrat* confirms that Louis Armstrong was committed to the Home after firing a revolver on the corner Rampart and Perdido Streets on December 31, 1912.²¹ That Armstrong was committed to the Waifs' Home following this incident and remained for eighteen months is the account most frequently given.²² It is possible, however, that he was committed on more than one occasion or for a longer period of time.

Since the Home also served as a kind of day school, Armstrong may have continued visiting the Home and playing in the Band after his release.

Though serious offenses such as Armstrong's could carry open-ended sentences, youths convicted of less serious offenses like fighting or petty larceny could be sentenced to the Home for a matter of weeks or months. Such sentences were common, and it is plausible that Armstrong spent some time in the home before and after his sentence for firing the pistol.²³ The *Times-Democrat* article recounting Armstrong's arrest and sentencing describes him as "an old offender," suggesting that he had had previous run-ins with the police, which could have warranted brief sentences at the Waifs' Home.²⁴

Gary Giddins interviewed Joseph Jones, who recalled that Armstrong was committed to the Home at least twice. He also interviewed Joseph L. Peyton, “the clerk of court for Orleans Parish Juvenile Court since 1940 and the successor in that job to his father, who had it from 1908. [Peyton stated that] Louis was in and out of the Waif’s Home during his early teenage years. Peyton says that Louis’s chief crime was stealing newspapers from the white boys, who sold them on streetcars. That was a ‘white-only’ job, he says, and whenever Louis was seen leaving a streetcar with papers under his arm, he was arrested and returned to the Waif’s Home.”²⁵

Describing his arrest in a 1960 interview, Armstrong stated that “he ‘went back to the orphanage’ on New Year’s Day.” Max Jones later addressed this issue in an interview with Armstrong, to which Armstrong replied, “Well I went in January and I stayed all of 1912, no I stayed all of 1913, and I got out in June of 1914. So I stayed there a year and a half. . . . I don’t remember being taken to the Waifs’ Home twice.” In a telephone interview, David Dahlgren recalled that Armstrong had been in the Home twice. The second time, he was in “serious trouble,” suggesting that he had been committed to the Home and released prior to 1913 for a less serious offense. Joseph Jones’s wife recalled that Armstrong first came to the Home in 1910. Peter Davis and David Dahlgren stated that Armstrong spent five years in the Home.²⁶

In addition to the musical activities of the boys interned there, the Home served as a kind of music day school for boys who were not living at the Home. A number of the oral history informants recalled going to the Home for an afternoon to practice music or play with the band. Joe Rene specifically recalled that his brother, Henry “Kid” Rena and Louis Armstrong, among others, returned to the Home to take lessons after their release.²⁷

Armstrong probably returned to the Home after his release to study music with Peter Davis and perform with the band. Preston Jackson recalled hearing Louis Armstrong performing with the Waifs’ Home Band at the dedica-

tion of the Thomy Lafon Playground. That playground, the first open to African-American youths in the South, was dedicated on August 28, 1915, and did include a band performance. If Jackson is correct, that would place Armstrong playing in the band 13 months after he was supposed to have been released from the Home. It is possible that Armstrong was continuously interned there throughout that time, had been released and re-committed, or continued performing with the band after being released.²⁸

Peter Davis taught instrumental music and directed the band, choir, and singing quartet at the Home. Davis was an eclectic musician. He was proficient on a number of instruments—six or seven according to David Dahlgren—and had a deep knowledge of European art music and contemporary brass band music and dance music. He was described as “very eccentric,” by Dahlgren, who emphasized that Davis “gave his entire life and almost every waking moment of his day to working for music for young people.” Davis never married, and Dahlgren expressed concern that Davis lived in a state of poverty following his retirement, noting that he retired shortly before the pension system for New Orleans city employees was instituted. Though Armstrong recalls only Peter Davis and his singing teachers in his 1954 biography, Laurent August related that his cousin Charlie Valteau and D’Jalma Ganier taught Armstrong at the Home. Richard Knowles posits that Peter Davis may not have been a good reader, and that “outside help” was brought in for more “formal music education.” Amos White stated that Joseph Jones had tried to convince him to come to the Home to teach music.²⁹

Armstrong recalled two singing teachers at the Home: “Miss Spriggins” and “Miss Vignes, who taught the higher grades.” Lynn Abbott has identified Naomi Spriggins as “probably the ‘Miss Spriggins’ who gave Louis Armstrong his first ‘singing lessons’ during his stint at the Colored Waifs’ Home.” Naomi Spriggins graduated from Straight University in 1912, became a public school teacher, and was assigned to the Waifs’ Home by the Orleans Parish School

Board. Leontine Vignes worked full-time as principal of the Waifs' Home. She was appointed by the school board as the Home's teacher in 1906. The educational component of the Home was administered by the board of directors of the New Orleans public schools. The 1918 *Times Picayune* feature on the Home highlights the singing groups at the Home and identifies Peter Davis as the director. Davis probably directed the singing choir and quartets, and Spriggins and Vignes probably taught voice culture, including *solfège* and reading. Spriggins would have received extensive training in music and music instruction at Straight University. Spriggins and Vignes were both "apparent products of New Orleans' more or less advantaged 'Black Creole' society . . . [and] were no doubt sufficiently versed in voice and piano culture."³⁰

Armstrong had formed singing quartets with his friends prior to his time at the Home. These activities continued during his stay at and after his release from the Home and included on-stage performances at events like the Crescent Theater's amateur nights. Abbott has suggested that Armstrong's early singing contributed substantially to his development as a musician, citing "the shared knowledge of the mechanics of quartet singing [that] apparently served the traditional brass band musicians of black New Orleans as a common point of departure." Armstrong began singing in quartets with neighborhood friends and continued to perform in quartets at the Home. These groups sang spirituals, hymns, and popular songs. The 1918 *Times Picayune* article lists some of the songs the boys sang: "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," "Shall We Meet Beyond the River," "Jesus Washed My Sins Away," "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and "Good-bye Broadway, Hello France." It goes on to state that "the one in charge of the music will tell you the boys will sing some of 'their songs and then some of your songs,' and you recognize a few of the old camp meeting favorites of the white folk."³¹

Armstrong went into the Home with little or no experience playing the cornet and emerged a competent cornetist. This is evi-

denced by Kid Ory's account of Armstrong's playing following his release from the Home:

One evening, Benny brought Louis, who had just been released from the Waif's Home, to National Park, where I was playing a picnic. Benny asked me if I would let Louis sit in with my band. I remembered the kid from the street parade and I gladly agreed.

Louis came up and played 'Ole' Miss' and the blues, and everyone in the park went wild over this boy in knee trousers who could play so great. I liked Louis's playing so much that I asked him to come and sit in with my band any time he could.³²

Alfred Williams remembered that "they put Louis in jail and kept him in there indefinitely, you see, and that's how he learned how to play the trumpet [cornet]. [He] came right out of the Waif's Home playing the trumpet."³³ Though it is possible that Armstrong had had some experience playing the cornet before he entered the Home, it is clear that his music education in the Home was substantial and played a significant part in his musical development.

According to Abbey Foster, who left the Home in 1912, the Waifs' Home's brass band was formed in 1911. Foster recalled that he and another boy had inspired Peter Davis to start the band: "We used to take railroad spikes and play on the sides of the walls. And sometimes we would use the forks out of the kitchen; I'd use the fork and he'd use the cooking spoon and beat on the tub. And from then on, Old Man Dave [Peter Davis] got the idea of building up a band." Initially, the instrumentation consisted of snare drum, a tub used as a bass drum, a clarinet, two cornets, and a bass horn. Over time the band grew and acquired additional instruments.³⁴

The band relied on written music to some extent, and band director Peter Davis taught his students to read. Some evidence, however, suggests that Armstrong did not become a proficient reader at the Home. When asked about the band and whether they read music, Wilbert Tillman recalled that they learned to



Colored Waifs' Home Brass Band, c. 1913. (l to r): Peter Davis, Henry "Kid" Rene, Jeffrie Harris, Gus Vanzan, Isaac Smooth, James Brown (Courtesy Louisiana State Museum)

play by ear as well as to read music. Though Davis "strictly" taught all of them to read music, he would not stop them from playing by ear if they were capable of doing so. Tillman credited that approach with "why they grew so fast to be musicians. Louis played a long time by ear before he began to see the light to read." Recalling Armstrong's cornet playing following his release from the Home, Alfred Williams stated that "he wasn't reading, you know, just . . . Mr. Davis tried to teach him music but he, you know . . ." Williams may have used "reading" to refer to "sight-reading," and Davis's attempt at teaching Armstrong to read likely resulted in at least some understanding of musical notation. A number of photographs of the band depict music stands prominently placed in front of the band.

In 1912, the Waifs' Home held a fund-raiser to raise money for "books and music" for the "boys of the home [who] have an organized brass band and are doing well in their study." This suggests that acquiring sheet music was an important need for the band.³⁵

It has been claimed that Armstrong did not learn to read music until joining Fate Marable's band in 1917.³⁶ Armstrong goes into considerable detail in his account of learning to read in Marable's band: "[David Jones] took the trouble between trips to teach me to read music. I learned very quickly. Br'er Jones, as I later called him, taught me how to divide the notes so that whenever Fate threw a new arrangement I was able to cope with it, and did not have to sit and wait with my cornet in my hand for Joe

Howard to play the tune once and then turn it over to me. Of course I could pick up a tune fast, for my ears were trained, and I could spell a little too, but not enough for Fate Marable's band."

This statement suggests that Armstrong could in fact read music when he joined Marable's band. First, Armstrong emphasizes that what Jones taught him was rhythmic notation ("divide the notes"), an aspect of reading that is especially difficult to master without hearing the part first. Second, Armstrong makes an important distinction between *reading* and *spelling* that is not common in modern usage. As Thomas Brothers points out, "New Orleanians from this period distinguished between 'reading' musical notation (what is now usually called 'sight-reading') and, more basically, being able to spell." It is entirely possible that Armstrong was a reasonably good reader, but not capable of the kind of expert fluency required of trumpet players in a show-band accustomed to sight-reading new material on the bandstand. Armstrong, like all of the boys at the Home, probably learned to read music to some extent during his stay there.³⁷

Like many New Orleans bands, then and now, the Waifs' Home Band probably strived to be able to provide music "for all occasions." Substantial evidence provides insight into the different possible repertoires and styles of the band. James Lincoln Collier states that "it was not, of course, a jazz band. Its repertory would have been a whittled-down version of the standard brass band repertory of the day: marches, religious songs, patriotic tunes, and old favorites like 'Swanee River,' 'Listen to the Mocking Bird,' 'Home, Sweet Home,' and 'Maryland, My Maryland.'" Brothers offers "At the Animal's Ball" and "When The Saints Go Marching In" as examples of the types of pieces the band would have played.³⁸ Armstrong recalled that, "Mr. Davis made the boys play a little of every kind of music." Though he later claimed that he "played all classical music . . . in the orphanage . . . Liszt, Bach, Rachmaninoff, Gustav Mahler, and Haydn," this later statement probably rep-

resents a moment of casual exaggeration and was not meant to be taken literally. The band's repertoire was probably eclectic, reflecting the band's ability to provide appropriate music for a wide variety of events.⁴⁰

In 1929 the Unity Industrial Life Insurance Company presented musical instruments to the Municipal Boys' Home Colored Department.⁴¹ A copy of the program for the presentation ceremony is preserved in the Waifs' Home vertical file at the Hogan Jazz Archive. The musical part of the program consisted of instrumental selections performed by various members of the Waifs' Home band. An instrumental quartet played "Somebody is Praying for You"; a trio played "All Most Persuading" (which may have referred to the hymn "Almost Persuaded"); and the entire band played "America," "Auld Lang Syne," and "Sing On." Though this concert took place fifteen years after Armstrong had left the Home, the band was still under the direction of Peter Davis, and some inferences about earlier iterations of the band are possible. "Sing On" was recorded in a swinging improvisational jazz style by the Sam Morgan band in 1927, and it is possible that the Waifs' Home Band was influenced by that recording. It is likely that the band had different repertoires for different engagements, and that this particular engagement probably represented the most formal kind that the band would have had.⁴²

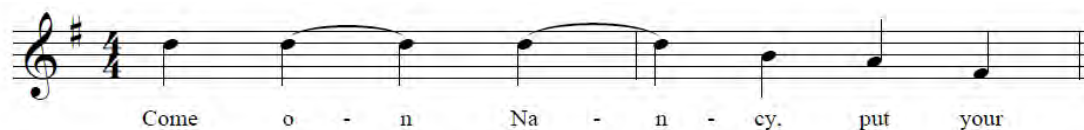
In a 1960 interview John Casimir, the well-known jazz clarinetist and bandleader, goes into detail about Armstrong and the Waifs' Home band. He relates the specific style and sound of the band by singing to depict Armstrong's cornet playing in the band. *Figure 1*, below, provides a transcript of that conversation along with transcriptions (*a, b, c, d, and e*) of the musical examples sung by Casimir. To transcribe the spoken sections, I used the oral history recording and transcript available at the Hogan Jazz Archive. In transcribing the examples sung by Casimir, I have attempted to reproduce the sounds of Casimir's vocalization as accurately as possible using standard musical notation. Casimir's key is not consistent between

Figure 1: Transcription of John Casimir interview.

Allen: Did you play with Louis much?

Casimir: No I didn't play with Louis myself. Louis used to be in Jones' Band. And they'd come by the Tulane Theatre on Common Street. All of the boys used to come out and play [sings]

a. (19:22)



Kid Rena, George Washington on Trombone, Ikey Smooth . . . Ten or fifteen of them . . . they would bring them out there and let them play around there. When they got to the run and everything . . . [sings]

b. (19:37)



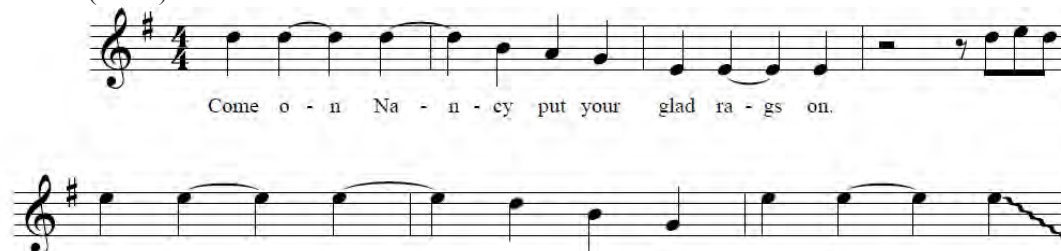
c. (19:46)



Allen: And what was that number?

Casimir: "Come on Nancy, put your glad rags on." [sings]

d. (19:59)



Everything stops and Louis plays

e. (20:09)



Figure 2: Cornet part from 1913 arrangement of “Sailing Down the Chesapeake Bay.”



examples. It ranges from approximately C to D. I have transposed all of his musical examples to the key of G major. Where no lyrics are given, Casimir is vocalizing on “da da” or “la da.” Casimir sings excerpts from his recollection of a performance of George Botsford’s 1913 song, “Sailing Down the Chesapeake.” Casimir gave the title of the song as “Come on Nancy, Put Your Glad Rags On,” which is the first line of the chorus of Botsford’s composition. For comparison, *Figure 2* depicts the cornet parts from a 1913 band arrangement of Botsford’s song. Casimir’s description suggests that the band, and especially Armstrong, played in a looser, more improvised style than a strict reading band would have. Casimir taps out quarter notes as he sings and swings the eighth note, clearly demarcating 4/4 time. The arrangement is in 2/4 march time, and Casimir’s 4/4 time reflects a shift to a jazz rhythmic conception. *Figure 1.d* shows Casimir’s depiction of Armstrong’s playing at the beginning of a chorus. Casimir departs from

the melody in measure 3, simplifying the stiffer sounding F# of the arrangement with an E, making the phrase pentatonic and neatly balanced.⁴³ At measure four, Casimir inserts an eighth note fill. These alterations of the melody suggest that Armstrong was adding ad-lib fills and embellishments to the melody, and may have altered the melody to suit his individual style. *Figures 1.b*, *1.c*, and *1.e* do not clearly correspond with any part of the published arrangement, and Casimir identifies these as the types of “fills” and “runs” that Armstrong played. *Figures 1.b* and *1.e* fit with the harmony in measures 37-39 (first ending), which would be a suitable place for a fill or break. These examples both outline the melodies and demarcate a D7 chord in the last measure, producing a cadential effect. *Figure 1.c* may depict an ad lib phrase that may have been placed in the middle of the chorus such as in an improvised solo or collective chorus. This line could have been part of a break, solo, or collective improvisation. All of Casimir’s examples

are reminiscent of the driving rhythmic feel representative of Armstrong's mature style.⁴⁴

Casimir's account seems to describe an improvising band and may mark a contrast to the 1929 concert program. I have already posited that the band may have had different repertoire for different performance situations. Casimir seems to be describing an outdoor, casual concert, which would support this hypothesis. It is also possible that the band progressed from a rough, casual style in 1914 to the polished one represented in the 1929 program. Casimir's description makes the Waifs' Home band sound like an improvising jazz band. There are problems inherent to this analysis. Casimir is recalling musical events 45 years after the fact. It is possible that Casimir has conflated various musical events or has reinterpreted this event with later musical practices. Casimir does, however, demonstrate accuracy in naming the musicians who played in the band at that time and seems to be offering what he considers to be a genuine account. Thomas Jefferson, however, related that Peter Davis did not permit the boys in the band to "jazz up a number," presumably meaning that jazz-inflected improvisation such as Casimir described was not permitted. Casimir's account, however problematic, should be considered in an investigation into the musical practices of the Waifs' Home Band.

As we continue to deal with such issues as public education, poverty, racism, and juvenile crime, we stand to learn valuable lessons from Joseph Jones, Peter Davis, Louis Armstrong, and the Waifs' Home. The story of Louis Armstrong and the Waifs' Home is one of a disenfranchised, impoverished youth whose experiences at a benevolent and progressive public institution run by dedicated community leaders set the stage for a groundbreaking and incalculably successful career.

This article is based on a portion of the author's Tulane University master's thesis, which is available in the University Archives.

Endnotes

1 Louis Armstrong, quoted in Terry Teachout,

Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 36.

- 2 Louis Armstrong, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* (New York: Da Capo, 1954), 22.
- 3 Though James Lincoln Collier, *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 36), among others, claims that Jones's "title [Captain] was honorary", David Dahlgren related to George W. Kay that Jones was a translator—he spoke Tagalog, Spanish, and French—and served as an "aide to General MacArthur" in the Philippines, a position which a cursory investigation leads me to believe would have been reserved for officers holding the rank of Captain. See Kay's article and interview with Dahlgren; both are available at the Hogan Jazz Archive. A thorough investigation into the life of this important civic leader is needed.
- 4 Bob Morris, "Captain Jones," *The Second Line*, vol. 8, no. 5-6 (May 1957), 13; Interview, George W. Kay with Mrs. Joseph Jones at the Milne Boys Home, January 7, 1972, housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive; Interview, George W. Kay with David Dahlgren at the Milne Boys Home, April 25, 1972 (No. 3), housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive; "Cap Jones Funeral Rites Set Thursday," *New Orleans States Item*, April 22, 1957, (no page number given, available in the William Russell Collection Jazz Files M (Armstrong) Folder 122, housed at the Historic New Orleans Collection).
- 5 "Wayward Boys Are Still A Problem," *Times-Picayune*, August 5, 1904, 5; Interview, George W. Kay with Mrs. Joseph Jones; Laurence Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997), 70; George W. Kay, "The Milne Boys and Colored Waifs and 'Little Louis,'" *The Second Line*, vol. 26 (Spring 1974), 9.
- 6 "Negro Orphans Gone," *Times-Picayune*, October 3, 1915, 1.
- 7 "Colored Asylum," *The Black Republican*, May 20, 1865; *New Orleans Tribune*, May 6, 1865, 2; "The Soulé Asylum," *New Orleans*

- Tribune*, October 27, 1865, 4; "Mrs. L. de Mortie; Orphans," *New Orleans Tribune*, May 25, 1865, 6. "The Product of the Fair," *New Orleans Tribune*, June 11, 1865, 2; "Freemens' Orphans' Educational and Industrial Home," *New Orleans Tribune*, July 14, 1865, 4; "Louisiana Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans," *New Orleans Tribune*, September 7, 1866, 4.
- 8 "A Noble Work," *Daily Picayune*, 25 August 1892, 3; "Sisters of the Holy Family," *Times-Picayune*, June 11, 1911, 32. Sister Mary Bernard Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown: Black Nuns in Nineteenth Century New Orleans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 20.
 - 9 "Sisters of the Holy Family," *Times-Picayune*, June 11, 1911, 32.
 - 10 "A Colored Orphanage," *Times-Picayune*, March 5, 1893, 9; "Corner-Stone of Thomy Lafon Home for Orphan Boys," *Daily Picayune*, April 28, 1908; Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown*, 180.
 - 11 "Colored Industrial School," *Times-Picayune*, March 30, 1903; "Colored Waifs. Mrs. Joseph's School," *Times-Picayune*, March 16, 1904; "Appeal For Colored Waifs," *Times-Picayune*, December 13, 1917.
 - 12 Interview, George W. Kay with Mrs. Joseph Jones.
 - 13 Judith Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs," *Times-Picayune*, April 21, 1918; Interview, George W. Kay with Mrs. Joseph Jones; "Colored Waifs," *Times-Picayune*, September 2, 1912; "Judge Wilson and Agent Agnew Give Helpful Talks," *Times-Picayune*, October 14, 1912.
 - 14 The agricultural activities at the Home seem to be closer in scale to a farm than a garden. See Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs."
 - 15 Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs;" Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 38, 48, et passim; Armstrong, *Satchmo*, (manuscript housed at Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies); Interview, George W. Kay with Mrs. Joseph Jones.
 - 16 Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs."
 - 17 Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs;" Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 48.
 - 18 Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006), 98; Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 38; "Satchmo Comes Home," *Dixie*, October 31, 1968, 8; "Waifs Still Wait at Door of Chance," *Times-Picayune*, January 9, 1914.
 - 19 "The New Orleans All-Stars," an unidentified hand-written article located in Folder 2 of the William Russell Collection Jazz Files M (Miscel.) housed at the Historic New Orleans Collection (quotation marks are as they appear in the original document).
 - 20 Richard H. Knowles, *Fallen Heroes: A History of New Orleans Brass Bands* (New Orleans: Jazzology Press, 1996; Abbey "Chinee" Foster, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, 21 March 1961.
 - 21 *Times-Democrat*, January 2, 1913, quoted in Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life*, 69. This article identifies Armstrong as being twelve-years old, implying a 1900 birthday, and not 1901. This suggests that Armstrong had believed his birthday was July 4, 1900, at that time, undermining some of the various conjectures that have been given to explain why Armstrong claimed to have been born on July 4, 1900. These include that he did so in order to avoid the draft (Collier, *Louis Armstrong*, 21), or to advance his career in Chicago (Gary Giddins, *Satchmo: The Genius of Louis Armstrong* [New York: Da Capo Press, 1988], 23).
 - 22 See, for example, Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*, 100; Collier, *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius*, 43; Teachout, *Pops*, 38.
 - 23 See, for example, the following *Times-Picayune* articles: "Black Boy Slayer," December 3, 1913; "Juvenile Court," January 18, 1910.
 - 24 In Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life*, 69.
 - 25 Giddins, *Satchmo: The Genius of Louis Armstrong*.

- 26 Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life*, 69; Giddins, *Satchmo: The Genius of Louis Armstrong*, 40; Teachout, *Pops*, 392; David Dahlgren, Telephone Interview with Richard B. Allen, transcript held in the "Peter Davis" Vertical File at the Hogan Jazz Archive, April 27, 1971; "Mrs. Jones Presents Horn to New Orleans Jazz Museum," *Times-Picayune*, April 11, 1962; "Music Teacher Recalls Satchmo's Early Years," *Times-Picayune*, August 22, 1962 (no page number given, contained in the Peter Davis File of the New Orleans Jazz Museum Collection at the Louisiana State Museum).
- 27 Joe Rene, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, April 7, 1960.
- 28 Preston Jackson, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, June 2, 1958; "Playgrounds Dedicated," *Times-Picayune*, August 29, 1915.
- 29 Interview, George W. Kay with David Dahlgren; Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 40; Knowles, *Fallen Heroes*; August Laurent, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, March 21, 1960; Amos White, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, August 23, 1958.
- 30 Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 40; Al Kennedy, *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 7; Lynn Abbott, "Remembering Mr. E. Belfield Spriggins," 23; Straight University Catalogue, 1911-1912; The *Olio*, vol. 30, no. 2 (December 1915), housed at the Louisiana Collection; Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs;" Lynn Abbott, "'Play That Barber Shop Chord': A Case for the African American Origin of Barber Shop Harmony," *American Music*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1992), 317-318.
- 31 Abbott, "Play That Barber Shop Chord," 318; Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs."
- 32 In Joshua Berrett, *The Louis Armstrong Companion: Eight Decades of Commentary* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 75.
- 33 Alfred Williams, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, February 3, 1961.
- 34 Abbey "Chinee" Foster, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, March 21, 1961.
- 35 Wilbert Tillman, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, January 20, 1966; Alfred Williams, Oral History housed at the Hogan Jazz Archive, February 3, 1961; Arthur Scully, Jr., "The Building Nobody Wanted," *Jazz Journal*, vol. 23, no. 1 (January 1970), 12; Neale, "Making Good Citizens of the City's Negro Waifs;" "Colored Waifs," *Times-Picayune*, September 2, 1912.
- 36 See, for example, Collier, *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius*, and Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*.
- 37 Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 182; Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*, 126.
- 38 Collier, *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius*, 37.
- 39 Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*, 102. These two examples, along with "Maryland, My Maryland," would become popular jazz standards.
- 40 Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 39; Teachout, *Pops*, 36, 39.
- 41 The Home had changed buildings and names, but this is still essentially the same institution, with Joseph Jones running the Home and Peter Davis running the band.
- 42 Program, Presentation of Instruments, 1929 (Peter Davis Vertical File at the Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz).
- 43 Measure numbers refer to Figure 2, the cornet part from Ribe Danmark's arrangement. The reader should find the correlative measures of the examples.
- 44 John Casimir, Oral History housed at Hogan Jazz Archive, March 30, 1960; Botsford, "Sailing Down the Chesapeake," arr. Ribe Danmark, 1913, 1st and 2nd cornet, New York: Jerome C. Remick & Co., 1913, available in Sheet Music collection at the Hogan Jazz Archive; "Sailing Down the Chesapeake Bay" for voice and piano, music by George Botsford, words by Jean C. Havez, New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1913.

Mapping a Historic Funeral and Second Line

By

Keli Rylance

Identifying locales in historic photographs is often a challenging endeavor. Frequently, photographs entered cultural heritage repositories with scant or inaccurate information. Changing preservation standards also contributed to information entropy: some institutions dry-mounted photographs onto various rigid substrates without transcribing *verso* manuscript additions. Even more frequently, unidentified copy prints circulated across many different repositories, and similarly to a children's gossip game, accumulated often divergent descriptions. For researchers attempting to secure location identification relevant to twentieth-century New Orleans

jazz marching bands, this article offers some experiential tips.

In the summer of 2010, as the Southeastern Architectural Archive (SEAA) was planning its exhibit *Tremé: People & Places*, staff consulted with the Hogan Jazz Archive (HJA) in order to select historic photographs to augment the SEAA's architectural renderings, neighborhood and lot surveys, and insurance maps. HJA staff suggested a series of ten photographs taken by the Canadian artist Ralston Crawford (1906-78) and loosely identified as "Kid Howard Band/Tremé/'Little Eleven'/Grand Marshall/Caldonia Club Funeral/1958." Since the exhibit was meant to focus on



Figure 1: 1332-1402 St. Philip Street, 1958, with view of Edgar Leal, Jr., residence and Tip-Top Bar (razed) (Ralston Crawford Collection NO 2-58-18)

specific places, it was important to establish photographic settings with greater precision. By utilizing the combined resources of Tulane University's Special Collections departments – as well as by walking the streets – it was possible to establish a series of positions across the Sixth and Seventh Wards that Kid Howard's band had passed.¹

A few of Crawford's photographs documented corner store businesses, and those were the easiest to identify by using the Louisiana Research Collection's historic city directories: the Tip-Top Bar (fig. 1. 1400-1402 St. Philip); M & N Laundry (fig. 2. 1333 St. Philip); and Mule's Super Market (fig. 3. 1701 Laharpe Street). Although the Tip-Top had been razed in 1971 (along with the Caldonia Inn) as part of a "slum clearance" initiative, the other two businesses endured, and in the case of the laundromat, the proprietors in 1958 and 2010 were one and the same. "Miss Juanita" De George acquired the property located at 1331-1333 St. Philip/1004-1010 Marais from Johnny Matassa, father to J&M Recording Studio owner Cosimo Matassa. Speaking to Miss Juanita and other neighbors revealed the identification of additional extant structures located around the St. Philip-Marais intersection (figs. 4-5). Since some facades had been altered since 1958, the SEAA's fire insurance atlases helped to confirm certain suppositions.

Although many researchers are familiar with Sanborn atlases, they often do not realize that each physical volume is unique. The Sanborn Map Company printed the lithographic maps and bound the sheets into enormous volumes. Sanborn provided composite update sheets — called slips — which insurance agents or atlas owners could cut and paste into the albums. A given volume might contain many layers of these so-called "pasters," which represent land use changes, redevelopment, renovation and infill. Different Sanborn atlas owners may or may not have made the same updates, or some may have gone out of business before additional updates were made. Comparative analysis of atlases may establish

terminus post quem and *ante quem* for structural changes.

Relevant to the Crawford photographs, the SEAA has two sets of 1937-1940 Sanborn atlases, with corrections to varying dates. For the Tremé exhibit, the atlases were used to confirm street addresses for structures that had undergone transformation or demolition. The latter included buildings captured in a series of sequential photographs that Crawford took along St. Philip Street, documenting the Tip-Top Bar, as well as residential properties located upriver (figs. 1 & 4), all of which were razed in 1971. Miss Juanita conveyed that she watched the city "tear it all down."

The Seventh Ward streets Crawford documented had been subjected to less dramatic changes. Mule's Super Market, although altered, was still identifiable and remains a neighborhood landmark. Walking the streets around this corner store verified two more positions – sequential photographs documenting residential structures – located between 1442 and 1452 North Derbigny (figs. 6-7). Restored since Hurricane Katrina, the houses look relatively unchanged today, and the unusual façade dormer on the 1450-52 property made a positive identification much easier than if the structure had remained a traditional double Creole cottage.

The establishment of place also contributed to resolving the deceased's identity. Since it seemed from the photographs that a crowd was dispersing from the 1332-1334 St. Philip Street property, a simple reverse address check yielded the name of Edgar Leal, Jr., who passed away on May 20, 1958 at Charity Hospital.² *The Times-Picayune* announced that friends, family, and members of the Caladonia (*sic*) Social and Pleasure Club were invited to attend his wake and funeral. Calvary Spiritual Church, located at 1229 St. Philip Street, housed the religious services, and Blandin Undertaking, located at 1116-1120 St. Claude Avenue (now the Backstreet Museum), handled funeral arrangements.³ Mr. Leal was buried in Holt Cemetery on Sunday, May 25, 1958. Since



Figure 2: 1331-1333 St. Philip Street/1014 North Marais Street, 1958, with view of M&N Laundry Cleaners (Ralston Crawford Collection NO 2-58-17)



Figure 3: 1701 Laharpe Street/1547-1549 North Derbigny Street, 1958, with view of Mule's Super Market & Bar (Ralston Crawford Collection NO 2-58-10)



Figure 4: 1322-1324 St. Philip Street, 1948 (razed) (Ralston Crawford Collection NO 2-58-19)



Figure 5: 1010-1032 North Marais Street, 1958 (behind M&N Laundry) (Ralston Crawford Collection NO 2-58-11)



Figure 6: 1442-1452 North Derbigny Street (Ralston Crawford Collection NO 3-58-28)



Figure 7: 1450-1452 North Derbigny Street (Ralston Crawford Collection NO 3-58-29)

Ralston Crawford had taken an extensive series of photographs associated with the Caldonia Club in 1953, he may very well have known Leal, a local painter.⁴

Over the fifty-two years he visited New Orleans, Ralston Crawford expanded his knowledge of local neighborhoods and traditions.⁵ While his earliest ventures into fine arts photography date from the 1930s, it was not until nearly ten years later that a two-year visiting professorship at Louisiana State University afforded him the opportunity to fully explore New Orleans as a photogenic subject. He became a friend and consultant to jazz historian Dick Allen and it was through that association that Crawford began to walk the streets along with musicians, stopping by their venues and joining their families at homes and annual celebrations. He increasingly contributed to the documentation of local music culture and was able to permeate Jim Crow boundaries by forging meaningful relationships. Place mattered to Crawford, and it mattered in creating relevant exhibition didactics.⁶

Other sources for identifying twentieth-century New Orleans places:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aerial Photographs Collection
The precursor to Google Earth, the Army Corps' aerial photographs document over sixty years of New Orleans urban history, dating back to the first flight runs in 1933.
<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/eng/edsd/air.asp>

The Guy Seghers Collections at the Historic New Orleans Collection and The Southeastern Architectural Archive: *Divided across two repositories, these records associated with four successive generations of New Orleans surveyors contain significant information about individual properties and lots, municipal tracts and mid-century urban developments.*
http://seaa.tulane.edu/sites/all/themes/Howard_Tilton/docs/finding_aids/Guy%20Seghers%20Office%20Records.pdf

<http://www.hnoc.org/>

About the exhibit:

Co-curated by Keli Rylance and Kevin Williams, *TREMÉ: People and Places* runs through November 4, 2011. The Southeastern Architectural Archive is located at 6801 Freret Street/300 Jones Hall, on Tulane University's campus. Telephone 865-5699.

Endnotes

1 Not surprisingly, Howard's band passed in close proximity to his residence and church. According to the 1958 *New Orleans Directory*, Howard lived at 1517 ½ St. Philip Street. He attended the Zion Hill Baptist Church located at 922 Treme Street.

2 *Polk's New Orleans City Directory*. Richmond, VA: R.L. Polk & Co., 1958, p. 533; "LEAL." *The Times-Picayune* May 23, 1958, p. 2 and "DEATHS" *The Times-Picayune* May 24, 1958, p. 21.

3 "LEAL," p. 2.

4 See The Hogan Jazz Archive. Ralston Crawford Collection Finding Aid: http://jazz.tulane.edu/sites/all/themes/Howard_Tilton/docs/RalstonCrawford.pdf

5 It is well known that Crawford came to New Orleans during the late 1930s, but he actually first visited the city in 1926. He briefly worked on a Caribbean tramp steamer that docked in the city's port. Alberta Collier. "Canadian 'Southern' Artist Keeps Returning to New Orleans." *The Times-Picayune*, July 18, 1976, Sect. 3, p. 8.

6 The first one-man exhibition showing Crawford's New Orleans jazz photographs was organized by Edward Wiegand at the Bienville Gallery, 539 Bienville Street in 1973.

According to Crawford's wishes, his remains were buried in St. Louis Cemetery No. 3. His May 1978 funeral procession passed by the New Orleans Museum of Art, Alvin Alcorn was one of his pall bearers and the Onward Brass Band played his second line. Photographer Sid Kaplan documented the event. See Deborah Bell Gallery. *Sid Kaplan: 1950s to the Present*. New York: 2005, p. 18. URL: http://www.deborahbellphotographs.com/downloads/kaplan_01.pdf

Three Fifteen and His Squares: Shreveport's David Blunson

By
Chris Brown

In 1937, Three Fifteen and His Squares, a music group from Shreveport, Louisiana, traveled 200 miles north for a recording session in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The musicians, led by David "315" Blunson, recorded four songs

biographical portrait of David "315" Blunson. They also document his ties to Texas Avenue, an area he celebrated in song. The lyrics to Blunson's "Saturday Night on Texas Avenue" pay a colorful tribute to Shreveport's African



released by Vocation Records. Apart from the group's four recordings, however, they left few traces of their existence. As a result, modern researchers have struggled to shed light on Three Fifteen and His Squares. Luckily for those curious about this enigmatic band, Blunson appears nearly a dozen times in an underexplored resource--his hometown's weekly African American newspaper, *The Shreveport Sun*. These references, which range from cryptic in-jokes to more descriptive articles, paint a

American main drag during its heyday:

In a spot in my hometown, I'd like for
you to go
And get woke up, and see a great show
We smoke weed, and we say hey-hey
We drink port wine until the break of
day
Saturday Night on Texas Avenue

Walk all night from place to place

Shuckin' and jivin' trying to get our gait
 Some be truckin' and some be doin' the
 Suzie-Q
 And if you stay long enough, you'll be
 truckin' too
 Saturday Night on Texas Avenue

When you walk out the door, on the
 street
 A tough fellow, I vow you're sure to
 meet
 He'll pull you, and he'll snatch you, and
 he'll hit you across the head
 And if you resist him, he'll shoot you
 dead-dead-dead
 Saturday Night on Texas Avenue

We'll walk in on Levy's and Jerry's too
 We'll stand and wonder what's next to
 do
 We'll sit down and knock a little drink
 Then we'll be drunk before we even
 think
 Saturday Night on Texas Avenue

We'll then sit in a booth, take a little
 peep
 Before we know it, we're dead asleep
 All of a sudden, we'll hear a row
 That's the owners telling you "ain't
 carrying sleepers anymore"
 Saturday Night on Texas Avenue¹

The story of David Blunson as reported
 by *The Shreveport Sun* begins in "Ballyhoo by
 Yours Truly—Me," a column commonly rife
 with jive talk and comedic jabs at the locals. In
 May 1932, the columnist related a story about
 stumbling upon Blunson's band practice:

Who said hard times can't make
 us think? The other evening,
 about 3:30, when ole Saul [*sic*]
 was beaming down on "Yours
 Truly's" backbone, while
 coming through a small short
 lane of houses behind "Bill"

Huntley's shop, here's what:
 David "313" Blunson, Olian
 Underwood, Hooks, and two
 or three other stags were seated
 in one of the cabins, rehearsing
 "Sleepy Time Down South"...
 they were playing the tune, if
 not perfectly...the boys seem
 to know that any port will do
 in a storm...the nickels they
 make will look as good to them
 as anybody's...attaboy, boys...
 Learn to get out and make the
 roads better yourself!²

This first mention of Blunson botched
 his nickname by a couple of numbers, yet the
 information strung together by "Yours Truly's"
 hyper-ellipses writing style offers interesting
 details. "Huntley's shop" probably refers to one
 of William P. Huntley's enterprises--Huntley
 Brothers Undertakers (located at 1017 Texas
 Avenue), Queen City Barber Shop (also at
 1017 Texas Avenue), or the Royal Barber Shop
 (located at 419 Market Street).³ Of these three,
 the Texas Avenue businesses seem the most
 likely candidates. Not only were they located
 in the middle of an African American section
 of Texas Avenue, but they also had a group
 of shotgun houses situated behind them on a
 street known as Reo Quarters. Fellow musician
 Underwood lived a few blocks northwest
 of Texas Avenue in the St. Paul's Bottoms
 neighborhood and worked as a pressman at the
 Service Printing Company.⁴ As for the rehearsal
 music, only thirteen months earlier Louis
 Armstrong and His Orchestra first recorded
 "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," which he
 would later adopt as his theme song.⁵

The second mention of Blunson in *The
 Sun* occurred two months later in July 1932.
 This time, the "Ballyhoo" columnist remarked,
 "David (315) Blunson, went to Kansas City to
 stay awhile, but 'Three' found the going better
 in the ole port, and he whipped it on back to the
 boys at Botto's Texas Avenue rendezvous, where
 you get your cold drinks and argue all you want



Texas Avenue, 1947 (Henry Langston McEachern Photographic Collection, 1941-2008; Archives and Special Collections, Noel Memorial Library, Louisiana State University Library in Shreveport, Shreveport). This photograph depicts the 800-1000 blocks of Texas Avenue. Structures mentioned in this article include: Municipal Auditorium (top center), shotgun houses behind Huntley Brothers Undertakers and Jerry's Bar (bottom right), and Star Theater (bottom left, with elevated rear).

to.”⁶ Whether Blunson visited Kansas City for music business is not explained; however, later references do mention his out-of-town music activities.

A few weeks later, in August 1932, the “Ballyhoo” columnist again commented on Blunson. This reference mentioned a city sixty miles west of Shreveport: “David (315) Blunson squawked the lowdown on Garland (Stifty) Phillips, the other day...He said this bird “Stifty” doesn’t think so much about the trip to

Longview, Texas, since the news reached the madame that he was ‘big-timing’ over there... They say this bird really likes his ‘sprawls.’”⁷ While no known sources identify Phillips as a musician, the city directory reveals he worked at the North Side Recreation Parlor and lived in the nearby St. Paul’s Bottoms neighborhood during this time period.⁸

In February 1933, Blunson again appeared in *The Sun*. This mention involves his recent performance in the “Happy Days”

minstrel show hosted by the Colored Catholics at the Star Theater. As usual, "Ballyhoo" provides the details: "Those who missed the Catholics' 'Happy Days' minstrels the other nite at the good ole Star, ain't got 'em, says us and what 'Yours' means to squawk the lovely young chorines did their stuff in big time style galore... Yeah, man!"⁹ The columnist then describes some of the performers at the show, such as

Ike Blaine ("the funny end man"), Mamie and Bernice Boyd (who "did the squaw dance"), Clara V. Chambers and Emma Ellis ("the two lil girls doin the hot-cha act in the overalls"), T. C. "Hooks" Maxie (who "stole His Highness Hi-De-Ho's stuff"), a "kid" named Buster (who "is a wow"), a "fellow" named Lyons (who "doesn't have to do anything but go up and take Bing's place"), and Lavassa "Garbage" Booth ("the old time troupier who knows the business down pat" and served as "the big shot feature").¹⁰ Among the description of these performers, the columnist also reported, "Our ole former pal of local radio crooning fame, who happens to be none other than David (315)

Blunson, got a great big encore when he carried 'em down 'That Lonesome Road'...They say ole 'Three' blasted the avenue birds' gossip that they don't come back...'Yours Truly', too, was s'prized...Thought he was gonna get the hook, but he got alotta cheers (not chairs)."¹¹ This lone reference to Blunson singing on the radio raises questions: which local station, what years was he performing, did he have a specific time slot such as 3:15 pm to explain his nickname?

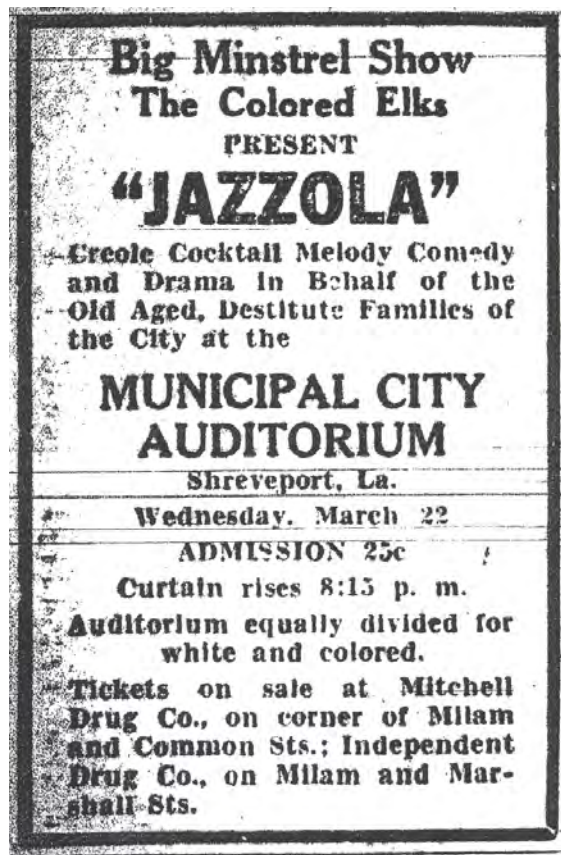
Unfortunately, no additional information has surfaced regarding Blunson's radio involvement. His performance of "That Lonesome Road" points to the jazz standard titled "Lonesome Road" originally recorded by Gene Austin in 1928.¹² Another *Sun* column, "Around Town By The Rambler," also reported on the "Happy Days" minstrel show. However, the Rambler devoted his entire column to criticizing the

audience's disrespectful behavior during the singing of one young performer's gospel song. Delivered in his usual style of thick dialect, he wrote, "I admit ter you dat hit wuz er minstrel show, but de simmon-headed, wooden-brained mens and womens didnt have sense enuff ter preciate a variety uv entertainment..."¹³

Only one month after Blunson's performance in "Happy Days," he appeared in another minstrel show. In March 1933 at the Municipal Auditorium, the Colored Elks hosted "Jazzola," a benefit show raising money for the "old aged, destitute families of the city."¹⁴ One-third of *The Sun's* article describing "Jazzola" is

missing due to a torn page, yet the remaining portion does include a list of musicians and entertainers:

[...] Bert Benton's Original Night Hawks orchestra will furnish music for the occasion. A well known cast includes: Mildred Brown (torch singer of the blues), David



Shreveport Times, March 20, 1933

Blunson, Baby Bernstein, Nathaniel Jordan, Lavassa Booth, L. Wiggins, Elizabeth Crumbs, Margaret Thomas, Gladys Long, Amanda Moore, Lula Mae Love, Dora Stephens, Sophronia Jones, and many others. M. King, the magician, will do several stunts of magic; his act is one of the features of the occasion. A large crowd is expected to witness this great event for charity, and every effort has been put forth to make it a success.¹⁵

The “Jazzola” minstrel show also stands out for actually being mentioned in one of the city’s daily newspapers, *The Shreveport Times*. Neither of Shreveport’s daily newspapers commonly reported on entertainment for African American audiences. However, they did sometimes cover events marketed for mixed audiences with segregated seating. Such was the case for “Jazzola,” whose *Shreveport Times* advertisement stated, “Auditorium equally divided for white and colored.”¹⁶ *The Times* also featured a write-up of the coming event in its “At Local Theatres” column. Being able to read the complete text of this article sheds light on portions of *The Sun* article that are illegible and missing:

A minstrel show, “Jazzola,” [sic] will be presented at the Municipal auditorium by the colored Elks on the night of Wednesday, March 22. The manager and producer stated that after the expenses of the production are paid, the remainder of the proceeds will go to aged and destitute families here.

Joe Bright, well-known producer, formerly of New York City, is the director of the show.

Special arrangements for music for the production has been prepared by Marguerite Kimble, local music instructor, and Bert Benton, member of the original “Night Hawks.”

L. C. King, as Prince Dumo, the magician, will do several acts to prove that the hand is quicker than the eye. Those in the cast include: Mildred Brown, Lillian Adger, Baby Bernstein, Nathaniel Jordan, Lavassa Boothe, L. Wiggins, Elizabeth Crumbs, Margaret Thomas, Gladys Long, Amanda Moore, Lula Mae Love, Dora Stephens and Sophronia Jones.¹⁷

As fate would have it, David Blunson’s name does not appear in print alongside his fellow “Jazzola” cast members in *The Shreveport Times*. Identifying these other cast members reveals some had deep ties to Shreveport. *The Sun* regularly reported on local dances featuring Bert Benton’s Original Night Hawks from 1932 to 1936.¹⁸ Margaret Kimble led Miss Marguerite Kimble’s Seven Music Sparklers in 1932, and her husband, Andrew Kimble, served as the director of the local Star Theater in 1930.¹⁹ She had previously served as a piano player and music teacher in New Orleans.²⁰ Lavassa Booth, whose popularity was noted in the earlier “Happy Days” minstrel show review, performed with the Dixie Ramblers company at the Star Theater in September 1930.²¹

In late March 1933, Blunson again emerged in the “Ballyhoo” column: “They say our good ole buddy, ‘315,’ was mugged in a hot spot the other bright... Lookout, ‘Lonesome Road Crooner!’”²² Coming from “Ballyhoo,” one wonders if Blunson was violently robbed or merely hailed by fans at the previous week’s vaudeville show. Furthermore, could “bright” be a typographical error or a slang expression

by “Yours Truly” for “day”? Whatever the explanation, Blunson is still associated with the song “Lonesome Road.”

Blunson’s next mention in *The Sun* occurred in December 1933, again in “Ballyhoo.” The columnist posed the following question: “where are the boots of Buster Bennett, sez ole pal ‘315’ David Blunson... and this starts the argument all over anew between these two, ‘ME’ knows.”²³ Don “Buster” Bennett, also a musician, appears in print alongside Blunson again in 1936, but it is not known if they performed together.

No *Shreveport Sun* newspapers have been preserved for the years 1934 and 1935. However, issues from 1936 contain references to Blunson. In March, the “Ballyhoo” columnist wrote, “What the Ole Bally Man prays would happen [...] That David (315) Blunson makes the trip with that ‘sorta-so-so’ bunch o’ troupers when Morris-Castle pulls out o’ town, sonnie.”²⁴ Morris-Castle refers to the itinerant Morris and Castle Carnival Company, which operated in the 1920s and 1930s. Local newspapers from the spring of 1936 do not appear to mention this particular carnival group, but they do mention United Shows of America, which was co-owned by Castle. The group used Shreveport as their off-season winter quarters during this time period.²⁵

One month later, in April 1936, Blunson again appeared in “Ballyhoo.” The columnist stated, “ole palzie David (315) Blunson, who doesn’t forget to remind Me constantly when he’s blowin’ the burg for the west with a gang o’ local troupers that rehearses every day at Jerry’s, on the Nue.”²⁶ A reference to Jerry’s also appears in Blunson’s lyrics to “Saturday Night on Texas Avenue.” Jerry Eltife, a

Lebanese merchant who moved to Shreveport in the 1910s, owned Jerry’s Cafe & Bar No. 2, located at 1011 Texas Avenue.²⁷ His ownership of a bar catering to African Americans illustrates the multicultural dynamics of the neighborhood. The National Register of Historic Places marker installed at the nearby 800 block of Texas Avenue in 1979 emphasizes this point: “Preserved commercial block dating from between 1899 and 1917. Many early ethnic businesses were housed here, including Black, Jewish, Chinese, and Arab merchants.”²⁸ The

location of Jerry’s Cafe in the 1000 block of Texas Avenue places it in the heart of an African American district. In 1936, a *Sun* columnist wrote: “If any one wants to get a clear idea of just about how much colored people are advancing – especially the young gang – the Owl invites such person to spend a few minutes in the ‘ten hundred’ block of Texas avenue either Saturday or Sunday night. The hope of the Race, who invade this block, is shown up for really what they are – out for fun, wild pleasure, regardless to cost in money or health. My! But they are a happy bunch!!”²⁹

In addition to representing a vibrant multicultural hub, Texas Avenue served as an important transportation route during Blunson’s era. It doubled as United States Route 80, a transcontinental highway connecting Georgia to California.³⁰ From Shreveport, the highway’s western route served as the city’s primary connection to nearby Texas.

The final two appearances of Blunson in *The Sun* appear outside the “Ballyhoo” column. “Ballyhoo” disappeared from the newspaper by May 1936. A new society column titled “The Owl Looks ‘Em Over” filled the void. Blunson’s final two *Sun* appearances occurred in this column and imply traveling, yet they



Along with many other Shreveport clubs, churches, businesses, and individuals, Jerry’s Cafe & Bar No. 2 placed an advertisement in *The Shreveport Sun* supporting the Ambassador Club in its celebration of “National Negro History Week” in 1936. *Shreveport Sun*, February 15, 1936.

lack specific details. In July, the Owl stated, “David (315) Blunson, crooner and entertainer, was spied on the streets Sunday afternoon, back from where?”³¹ Only two weeks later in August, the columnist noted, “The following musicians have come home to ‘roost’: Don (Buster) Bennett, David (315) Blunson, Jimmie (Tieshire) Brown...”³² It is not clear, though, if these musicians worked together or separately.

The story of Blunson in *The Shreveport Sun* ends in 1936. No issues from 1937 have been preserved, and he does not appear to be mentioned in issues from 1938 or later. These circumstances are especially frustrating since his band’s recordings occurred during the missing year – 1937. However, a fortunate publishing partnership reveals one final Blunson reference. Throughout 1937, *The Louisiana Weekly*, an African American newspaper from New Orleans, included one full page of articles and advertisements originating from Shreveport. This “Shreveport Edition” page even printed the “Ballyhoo” column. In March 1937, “Yours Truly” wrote, “David ‘315’ Blunson and his gang of four, did a good job of it recording up at ‘The SPA’ last wk.; they say ‘twas way up.”³³ The spa refers to Hot Springs, Arkansas, a city known for its bathhouses, bootlegging, gambling, and prostitution.

At their Hot Springs recording session, Blunson’s group, Three Fifteen and His Squares, recorded four songs: “Saturday Night on Texas Avenue” backed with “Three Fifteen Blues” (Vocalion 03515) and “Drop My Stuff” backed with “Mollie Mae Blues” (Vocalion 03560). The labels on these records identify the music as “vocal blues with instrumental accompaniment,” and the writer’s credit for each song lists “Dave Bluntson.” The copyright details for these compositions, provided in the Library of Congress’s *Catalog of Copyright Entries* for 1937, list “Dave Bluntson” and “David Bluntson.”³⁴ It would seem that these sources misspelled his last name by adding a “t.” Another explanation for this discrepancy would suggest that Blunson’s hometown newspaper, featuring columnists who regularly interacted

with him, misspelled his name each time it appeared in print over a five-year period.

Details of the Hot Springs recording session were compiled by Richard Raichelson, who wrote the liner notes to *Arkansas Shout*, a compact disc released by Jazz Oracle Records in 2001. This release features the four recordings by Three Fifteen and His Squares, as well as an assortment of songs selected by other music groups who participated in the March 1-18, 1937, sessions. A field recording unit of the American Record Corporation hosted the sessions by fashioning a temporary studio out of a “room above an automobile dealership which sat across from the Garland County Court House” in the 500 block of Ouachita Avenue.³⁵ The 81 recordings done at the sessions involved music groups performing jazz, blues, western swing, white country/gospel, and black gospel.³⁶ Raichelson identifies Three Fifteen and His Squares as a group “based in blues but with the addition of an orchestra.”³⁷ He goes on to write, “Dave Bluntson is a very fine blues pianist, and sets the mood for all of the performances. The band does not seem to be consistently together and it could have used a stronger guitar player.”³⁸ Identifying Blunson as the piano player appears to be speculative, though. *Blues & Gospel Records, 1890-1943* identifies him as the vocalist, but lists the musicians as “unknown.”³⁹ While Blunson’s exact recording session responsibilities remain uncertain, it is worth noting that *The Shreveport Sun* only mentions his singing.

Musician and historian Gunther Schuller also addressed the musical legacy and competency of Three Fifteen and His Squares. In *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, he calls the group a “remarkable small jazz band” then notes that the group contains an “excellent blues trumpeter, a surprisingly good pianist (in the general florid Kansas City blues style of a Pete Johnson), and a fine unidentified guitarist, weaving deftly placed single-note countermelodies in three-way counterpoint with the trumpet and tenor. And again the bass and drums provide



the typical unmistakably stomping, heavy beat that one associates with Texas blues bands.”⁴⁰ Rounding out his comments, Schuller wrote, “Three Fifteen may not have been the most sophisticated territory group, but they worked very well within their limited capacities, and produced an honest, down-to-earth kind of jazz that is still a pleasure to hear.”⁴¹

Piecing together Blunson’s history with Shreveport newspaper articles and modern music commentaries proves a simpler task than using public records to trace his activities. The challenge stems from the irregular spellings of his last name. To recap, the newspaper consistently spelled his name “David Blunson” and referenced his nickname “315.” However, the Three Fifteen and His Squares phonograph records list the name “Dave Bluntson.” Unbelievably enough, public records from the 1930s indicate Shreveport was home to both a man named “Dave Blunson” and another man named “David Bluntson.” Assuming one of these men represents 315, then at the time of his 1937 recording session, he was either a 46-year-old who had consistently worked at a soft drink stand and domino parlor, or a 27-year-old who rarely surfaced in public records until his move to California in the 1940s.

Dave Blunson (1890-1968) worked as the proprietor of a cold drink stand and lived with his wife, Rosa, at 814 Taylor Street according to the 1930 census.⁴² Blunson married Rosa Laudin on September 30, 1924.⁴³ Shreveport’s annual city directory indicates Blunson remained at this address from 1925 to 1958.⁴⁴ From 1924 to 1946, he primarily worked at nearby 1029 Taylor Street; his occupational information lists: cold drinks (1924), soft drinks (1925 and 1946), domino parlor (1926-1933), and ice dealer (1938-1942).⁴⁵ In 1943 and 1945 Blunson worked at the Taylor Street Bar located at 1105 Taylor.⁴⁶ Considering his 1930 census “proprietor” title, perhaps Blunson served as the proprietor of these additional business ventures as well. Blunson’s Taylor Street addresses, located in an area razed circa 1959 for the building of Interstate 20, place him living and

working approximately three blocks southeast of Texas Avenue. At the time of his death on September 15, 1968, Blunson was living in Shreveport.⁴⁷

David Monroe Bluntson (1909-1958) worked as an auto mechanic at a garage and lived with his stepfather and mother, John and Carrie Mayfield, at 2816 Abbie Street according to the 1930 census.⁴⁸ This Abbie Street address is located two miles west of Texas Avenue. Bluntson married Agnes Richardson on June 15, 1931.⁴⁹ Researcher Chris Smith located Bluntson's California death certificate stating his parents were Jessie Bluntson and Carrie, née Watson, both of Louisiana.⁵⁰ Smith also notes that Bluntson "enlisted in the Army as a Private on 7th March 1941 in Los Angeles. His civilian occupation code indicates that he was either a blacksmith or a musician. He'd risen to Sergeant by the time of his discharge on 22nd February 1945."⁵¹ Bluntson died on October 20, 1958, in San Mateo and had been living in California for sixteen years.⁵²

At this time, determining which of these men is "315" seems impossible. Smith, who pieced together the California activities of David Monroe Bluntson, suggests he is "315." However, he makes no mention of the other man, Dave Blunson. Both Raichelson and Smith also mention a California musician whose remarkably similar name presents another maddening twist. With a name different from both Blunson and Bluntson, pianist David Blunston recorded the song "Blunston's Boogie," which appears on the flipside of Jimmy McCracklin's "You Deceived Me" issued in 1946 by Excelsior Records (Excelsior 182). Yet again, because of this name spelling discrepancy, this does not seem like a conclusive link to "315."

Three Fifteen and His Squares remain an enigmatic band. Fortunately, a handful of newspaper articles exist to confirm the group's Shreveport connection and document the early activities of their bandleader. Regrettably, the tangled trail of surname spelling discrepancies complicates a more precise identification of

David "315" Blunson. Regardless of this obstacle, Three Fifteen and His Squares should be recognized for their contributions to Louisiana's music history. In spite of producing a small body of work, Blunson and his band created an enduring legacy with their song describing the vibrant 1930s nightlife of Shreveport's Texas Avenue.

Endnotes

- 1 Three Fifteen and His Squares, "Saturday Night on Texas Avenue," 10" 78 rpm record, Vocalion, 3515, 1937, transcribed by Chris Brown.
- 2 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, May 14, 1932, 2.
- 3 *Brueggerhoff's Shreveport (Caddo Parish, La) City Directory* (Dallas, TX: RL Polk & Co., 1932), 289, 445; *Ibid.* (1931), 514.
- 4 *Ibid.* (1932), 281.
- 5 James Lincoln Collier, *Louis Armstrong, an American Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 245.
- 6 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, July 23, 1932, 3.
- 7 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, August 13, 1932, 2.
- 8 *Brueggerhoff's Shreveport (Caddo Parish, La) City Directory* (Dallas, TX: RL Polk & Co., 1933), 381.
- 9 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, February 11, 1933, 2.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Gene Austin, "That Lonesome Road," 10" 78 rpm record, Victor, 21098, 1928.
- 13 "Around Town By The Rambler," *The Shreveport Sun*, February 11, 1933, 2.
- 14 Advertisement, *The Shreveport Sun*, March 18, 1933, 8.
- 15 "Colored Elks To Present Big Minstrel 'Jazzola' At The Municipal Auditorium Mar. 22," *The Shreveport Sun*, March 18, 1933, 1.
- 16 Advertisement, *The Shreveport Times*, March 20, 1933, 8.
- 17 "At Local Theatres," *The Shreveport Times*, March 20, 1933, 6.
- 18 For additional information on Bert Benton's

group, see Chris Brown, "Swingin' on the 'Nue with Ike McKinney," *The Jazz Archivist* 22 (2009): 29.

19 Jack Ellis, "The Orchestras," *Chicago Defender*, November 26, 1932, 5; "Hits and Bits," *Chicago Defender*, September 27, 1930, 5.

20 Lynn Abbott, "'For Ofays Only': An Annotated Calendar of Midnight Frolics at the Lyric Theater," *The Jazz Archivist* 17 (2003): 3-4, 27-28.

21 "Hits and Bits," *Chicago Defender*, September 13, 1930, 5.

22 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, March 25, 1933, 8.

23 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, December 23, 1933, 7.

24 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, March 28, 1936, 7.

25 "Babe Born Here to 745-Pound Mother," *The Shreveport Journal*, March 28, 1936, 1.

26 "Ballyhoo By Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Shreveport Sun*, April 25, 1936, 7.

27 Advertisement, *The Shreveport Sun*, February 15, 1936, 7; "J. F. Eltife Succumbs to Brief Illness," *The Shreveport Times*, January 7, 1969, 10-A.

28 Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau, *Shreveport-Bossier Historical Tours: Maps* [Brochure] (Shreveport: Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau, 2003), 9.

29 "The Owl Looks 'Em Over," *The Shreveport Sun*, October 24, 1936, 7.

30 Richard F. Weingroff, "U.S. Route 80 The Dixie Overland Highway," *United States Department of Transportation: Federal Highway Administration*, last modified April 6, 2010, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/us80.cfm>.

31 "The Owl Looks 'Em Over," *The Shreveport Sun*, July 25, 1936, 2.

32 "The Owl Looks 'Em Over," *The Shreveport Sun*, August 8, 1936, 3.

33 "Ballyhoo by Yours Truly—'Me,'" *The Louisiana Weekly*, March 13, 1937, 9.

34 Library of Congress, *Catalog of Copyright*

Entries, Musical Compositions, Part 3

(Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), 472, 485, 547, 589. <http://books.google.com/books?id=9UVjAAAAIAAJ>.

35 Richard Raichelson, Liner Notes, *Arkansas Shout*, Compact Disc, Jazz Oracle, BDW 8025, 2001, unnumbered.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Robert M. W. Dixon, John Godrich, and Howard Rye, *Blues & Gospel Records, 1890-1943* (Oxford [England]: Clarendon Press, 1997), 923.

40 Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 790-791.

41 Ibid.

42 1930 United States Census (Population Schedule), Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, p. 13B, lines 66-67, April 15, 1930, HeritageQuest, ProQuest, accessed February 10, 2011.

43 Online Marriage Index, Caddo Parish Clerk of Court, accessed April 17, 2011, http://webserver.caddoclerk.com/General/marriage_public.shtml.

44 *Brueggerhoff's Shreveport (Caddo Parish, La) City Directory* (Dallas, TX: RL Polk & Co.).

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Social Security Death Index, RootsWeb, accessed April 17, 2011, <http://ssdi.rootsweb.ancestry.com>.

48 1930 United States Census (Population Schedule), Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, p. 24A, lines 32-34, April 15-16, 1930. HeritageQuest, ProQuest, accessed February 10, 2011.

49 Online Marriage Index, Caddo Parish Clerk of Court, accessed April 17, 2011, http://webserver.caddoclerk.com/General/marriage_public.shtml.

50 Chris Smith, "Words, Words, Words," *Blues and Rhythm, the Gospel Truth*, 217, 16.

51 Ibid., 17.

52 Ibid.

Letters to the Editor

That Buddy Bolden Photograph, Again...

The Justin Winston/Clive Wilson article in *The Jazz Archivist* Vol. XXII (2009) is a fine statement/survey - yet it raises a few extra questions.

Page 19, column 2, paragraph 2, quote: *"The guitar and bass players are now playing left-handed, which if they played so, was not mentioned in any interviews and doubtless would have been if they had."*

It would be difficult ever to say for sure whether or not such a fact would have been mentioned in any interview - yet I have once (1978) been at an interview with Herb Hall where he specifically stated that Jimmie Johnson was a strong **right** handed player (i.e. picked the strings with his right hand). Herb Hall and James "Jimmie" Johnson played together for quite some time in Don Albert's Orchestra.

Page 23, column 2, paragraph 4, quote: *"The image appears to have been taken on a cloudy day. There are no shadows."*

Well, the middle-bout of the bass casts quite a heavy shadow on the lower sound board part of the guitar which (judging by the *Jazz Archivist* front page photo print) indicates that light is coming in from the right (i.e. from musicians' left side). Looking at the point where the backdrop canvas touches the soil there is also some strong light (sunlight?) evident from the right. Overall, the photo gets darker and darker towards the left - so it seems that there is much more light on the right part of the total motive than on the left. Which would most likely not have been the case of an out-door shot?

Page 21, column 1, paragraph 2, quote: *"The original photograph was made outdoors, probably at an event where the Bolden Band was playing."*

If the band is at an event to perform, how come that drummer Cornelius Tillman isn't present? It looks like the band is sitting/placed on grass covered soil and not on any kind of stage. Judged by the photo composition, however, it seems more likely that they are posing inside a tent or at least under a shading

canvas. It is hard to conclude whether they were playing for a special event, at a public gathering, or another purpose.

Page 21, column 1, paragraph 2, quote: *"In the uncropped photo you can see that the canvas backdrop is not a tent."*

That is very true. But the canvas backdrop is fixed on something sturdy that might easily be an even bigger tent. The backdrop is completely straight horizontalwise, so it must be supported from behind. Is the support some kind of a wooden frame or is the canvas mounted on the 'even bigger tent/canvas' back ground, suggesting that it is an 'indoor' shot?

Page 21, column 1, paragraph 2, quote: *"The foreground shows a curved object, and it is our guess that this is a mellophone."*

Of course it could be that the Bolden Band was hired to play at a certain occasion - if playing a dance or the like, however, the band members would most likely have spread out a little more "on the stage", since the four members in the middle would be almost unable to handle their instruments without being in the way of each other.

Since guessing is now in the picture, maybe the band was just visiting one of the tivoli-like amusement park & entertainment shows available to the public? These (touring?) organizations often included special services for the public who wanted to take advantage of the latest inventions and modern devices.

So maybe - and we are approaching a little wild guessing - the Bolden Band was out to make some promotion material and just turned up to have their one photo taken and to record their one famous wax cylinder (in case of the latter, it would further explain the close line up - and the group appearance sans Tillman, since the drums would not have recorded well)?

Enlarged, the curved object in the foreground is specifying exactly to the look, constructional form, dimension, and table position of a phonograph **recording horn**.

Contradicting statements are, however,

not in favour of clear evidence. Regarding the recording event, the valve trombonist Willie Cornish (in the photo) recalled “. . . more probably a march than a blues or stomp. . . made by a company catering primarily to the ‘white’ trade.” Cornish also said that the cylinder was cut between 1890-1898 and titled a “novelty” tune, not carrying Bolden’s name.

Since Cornish knew the details of the cylinder so well, it must be supposed that he took part in the recording - but his statement as to the recording ‘date’ does not really fit in with most reports that Cornish was with the Bolden Band from about 1897 to 1906 (although enlisted in the U.S. Army for some time during 1898) - unless the cylinder was recorded in 1897, which in turn doesn’t fit in with the supposed date of the photograph?

In addition to Cornish, Jefferson Mumford also left the band in 1906 (both presumably being fired at the same time?).

If it was in fact a matter of an ‘on the spot’ recorded single cylinder, it would somehow explain why a copy has never been found?

There was an old story that the cylinder was stolen from Mumford’s room during a burglary - another story that it was stored in an outhouse by some collector in Biloxi(?), who had piled together other early jazz cylinders (Eddie Allen’s Whispering Gold Band cylinders, ex. Johnny St. Cyr?), and that the shelf broke and all cylinders were smashed to pieces. Has any further details been established as to these rumours?

If it is a matter of a phonograph company issue and not just a single, privately

recorded, Bolden cylinder, it is known that several Phonograph companies were active in New Orleans during the period remembered by Cornish. Are any catalogues available for research?

- Lief Bjerborg

By way of comment:

The 2009 edition of The Jazz Archivist, with its two different attempts to explain the anomalies in the only-known photograph of the Buddy Bolden Band, has generated more feedback than anything in any previous issue.

Justin Winston and Clive Wilson’s “tin-type theory,” the object of Lief Bjerborg’s remarks in the letter above, appears to have found more popular support than Gerhard Kubik’s “composite theory.” Nevertheless, Kubik’s ingenious proposition, like the incisive responses that we have published from

David Sager, Victor

Hobson, and now Lief Bjerborg, harbors many remarkable insights. Was the photo taken on a cloudy day, or is there evidence of some sort of directional light? Or, can both of these things be true? And, if the photographer had taken three steps back and made another exposure, or two more exposures if you still see light in the “composite theory,” would we be looking at a recording machine in the foreground, with its sound horn aimed at the band, and perhaps a few wax cylinders clustered about? The mysteries of jazz may never be fully revealed, and perhaps the same can be said for jazz photography. But, let’s just keep on trying to figure it all out.

- Hogan Jazz Archive staff



The Bolden Band Photo - once more one more time

Lorenzo Tio Birth Document

Jose Castaneda reports that, after nearly ten years research in collaboration with Charles Kinzer, Jack Stewart, and others, he found the birth certificate of Lorenzo Tio, Sr. in the archives of the Civil Registry of Tampico. As he opened the book containing the document, the paper began to disintegrate. Still, he was able to make this transcription:

1869

Nº 174

Lorenzo Marcos Tio

En Tampico de Tamaulipas a treinta de juniode 1869 siendo las seis y cuarto de la tarde se presentó en este juzgado a mi cargo Luis Marcos Tio manifestando un niño que nació en esta el día veinte y ocho de septiembre de mil ochocientos sesenta y siete a las once de la noche a quien se puso por nombre Lorenzo, hijolegítimo del presente y de Margarita Hazeur vecinos que son de este lugar fueron los testigos de este acto Pedro Laurent y Robert Legrud mayores de edad y de esta vecindad leída que les fue firman con el presente Juez.

Luis Marcos Tio

P. Laurent

Robert Legrud

In Tampico de Tamaulipas on the thirtieth of June 1869 at six and a quarter in the afternoon Luis Marcos Tio appeared before me in this court declaring a son who was born on the twenty-eighth of September 1867 at eleven at night to whom was given the name Lorenzo, legitimate son of the present and of Margarita Hazeur, to which Pedro Laurent and Robert Legrud, who are of legal age and of this township, read and signed this document before the present judge.



Jose Castaneda with the Tio document in the Archive of the Civil Registry of Tampico

AWARDED TWO GOLD MEDALS



Sidney Davilla, Jr.

WWL ARTIST

**Saxophone and Clarinet
Instruction**

**3424 Gentilly Blvd.
Phone RAYmond 2883**

Sid Davilla

Sid Davilla made a name in jazz revival circles as proprietor of the Mardi Gras Lounge, offering "The Best in Dixieland" at 333 Bourbon Street. The ad at left recalls Davilla's earlier musical contributions as a player, teacher, and radio artist. The ad appeared in the June 11, 1933, edition of *Radio Time*, a New Orleans-based "Amusement Guide" that published local radio station listings in conjunction with feature articles and related news reports. The October 1, 1933, edition of *Radio Time* included this item:

Sidney Davilla, Jr., WWL's Saxophone Virtuoso, was 18 years old a few days ago, and among the presents he received from his numerous radio listeners was an 18-karat Gold Plated Music Stand. We are told that this is the only music stand of its kind in the entire Southland, if not in all America. Everybody knows Sidney - he has been featured over Radio Station WWL for the past four years as Saxophone Soloist. His wonderful interpretations of the famous Rudy Wiedoeft has caused him to become one of the most popular saxophone solists on the air today, and he is heard every Thursday evening at 5:45 E. S. T. Everne Davilla, Sidney's sister, is his piano accompanist... Sidney wants to thank Mr. Joseph Cook and Mr. Diesbach, of Hamilton, Ohio, manufacturers of the famous "Hamilton" Music Stands, for this splendid gift...

Among Our Recent Visitors

Barry Martyn and Mina Lea Crais were in the house to pour over Mrs. Crais's donation of jazz photography and help identify some of the people in the pictures.

Assisting with the effort was our illustrious student worker, Samantha Bruner.



Also making the trip to Hogan Jazz Archive was this group of students from St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Virginia. Front row, l to r: Lynn Abbott (staff), Ned Ukrop, Nicholas Horsley, John Buoyer, Peter Ferramosca, Marshall Hollerith, Carter Rise. Back row, l to r: Christian Braden, Mitchell Phillips, Ned Ende, Ben Jessee, Michael Luke, Swain Molster, Will Abbott, Doug West. Photo by Nicholas Horsley

Curator's Commentary

How quickly a year passes. Alaina Hebert, who joined the Hogan Jazz Archive in July 2010 as our Associate Curator of Graphics, has taken a position as Acquisitions Librarian at Delgado Junior College in New Orleans. Although her tenure was relatively brief, Alaina contributed substantially in a myriad of ways to the Archive's operations, including the provision of the graphics shelf-list and vertical files tools on our new website (<http://jazz.tulane.edu>), accomplished in collaboration with Web Services Librarian Dave Comeaux, as well as in the processing of our film and video holdings and the Mina Lea Crais photography collection. Her elegance, attention to detail, and gracious manner with patrons brought something special to our team, and we wish her well in her new job. Replacing her will be Nicole Shibata, who holds a Master's degree in library science from UCLA and has previously worked with the Jazz Archive staff on preparation of a Louisiana Sheet Music digitization project that will provide open source access to Louisiana imprint and related sheet music from the 1830s to 1920, drawn primarily from what was previously the Louisiana Collection, with supplemental selections covering ragtime and jazz from the Archive's holdings. This database of approximately 700 titles will be available on LOUIS (Louisiana Digital Library) late next year. We are very pleased to have Nicole joining the Jazz Archive team.

In reflecting on the past year's accomplishments, I must reserve special attention for the Louis Prima Centennial Colloquium which was held at Tulane's Freeman Auditorium on December 11, 2010, made possible by generous funding from the Jay Pritzker Foundation. This was the first time I had organized such an event, and I must admit that the logistical issues were sometimes overwhelming, yet the end justified the means. The all-star cast of presenters included Dan Morgenstern, Will Friedwald, Marcello Piras, Jack Stewart, and Elijah Wald,

and the lectures ranged from Prima's friendship and collaboration with Pee Wee Russell (Morgenstern, with some great film) to racial cross-fertilization in Sicilian history ("Prima di Prima"—"Before Prima" - Piras), beginning in the 4th century or so. Friedwald got deep into Prima as a showbiz persona and icon. Wald had never done a paper on Louis Prima before and thanked me for the assignment afterward. (Once you've been bitten, Elijah....) Stewart provided a local perspective on Prima (suitably



Louis Prima in his prime

eccentric) and claimed that he sweated over this presentation more than any of his previous papers. We expected no less! What tied all the presentations together was the theme that Prima deserves serious recognition as a jazz artist and as an entertainer, which is a familiar combo to most New Orleans musicians. After the sessions everyone made it over to Joe Segreto's Eleven79 restaurant (joined by Tony Sylvester, Gia Prima's attorney) for a fabulous Italian feast, which is usually the high point of any

conference that deals with things Italian. Thanks to all our presenters and to the people who turned out for the colloquium—we had a ball.

More recently (beginning September 14, 2011, and running for six weeks), the Hogan Jazz Archive contributed 34 photographic prints of New Orleans jazz musicians shot by Lee Friedlander to a group show (with Warhol and Thomas Roma) at the Newcomb Art Gallery, expertly curated by professor Stephen Hilger and facilitated by Charles Lovell, Director of the gallery. Friedlander attended a dinner after the reception and seemed very pleased to be back in New Orleans. I was, too, after having just returned from two weeks in Europe, where my colleague from Tulane's Music Department, Matt Sakakeeny, and I attended conferences in Amsterdam ("Rhythm Changes: Jazz and National Identity," organized by Tony Whyton and Walter van de Leur) and Paris ("Jazz and Europe," organized by Laurent Cugny, Franz Kerschbaumer, and Luca Cerchiari). Themes of trans-national collaboration and getting beyond concepts of "American exceptionalism"

predominated, with lots of opportunities for making new contacts and renewing old friendships via sidebar chats amidst a steady flow of food (and drink). Our Tulane "tag team" "animated the conference" (in the words of one host), and we were certainly never at a loss for words. Since Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans musicians seem to be more cognizant of the historical context which underpins what they do in the present, which energizes our efforts to go ever deeper into the story.

During the last year, the number of donations to the collection has diminished, but what has come in has been significant. Trombonist Frank Naundorf (originally from Dresden, Germany), who has spent decades performing with brass bands in New Orleans, provided a collection of 115 marching band card orchestrations previously owned by Alvin Alcorn while he was with the Eureka. Also included in the donation were 25 open-reel tapes related to Andy Ridley's Louis Keppard research. B. L. and Gigi Barnes donated several sheet music folios and piano copies, including "The Ghost



Sample from collection of band cards used by Eureka Brass Band

of Mister Jazz.” (Rhetorical question: which are scarier, ghosts or clowns?) There was also an anonymous donation of a photograph of Louis Cottrell’s band playing for a function at Jeunes Amis Hall. Finally, our Italian colleague Francesco Martinelli donated a PDF of B. Zuculin, “Musiche E Danze Americane,” *La Lettura: rivista mensile del corriere della sera*, 19/8 (Agosto 1919), an early publication dealing with New Orleans jazz published in Milan, Italy. Pictured in the article is violinist Joe Fulco’s band from the Palace Theater, including (all unnamed in the piece) Santo Pecora (tb), Emile Stein (d), Joe Bevinetto (cl), Joe Maggio (sb), Leo Broekhoven (c), Sidney Wilson (p), and Ernesto Gargano (cello), a duplication of a caricature that appeared in the New Orleans *States* on May 11, 1919. Our situation regarding available shelf space (very little left in Jones Hall) means that we have to be selective about donations, which has therefore led to a greater

emphasis on creating new modes of access and better representation of the collections online, thus the aforementioned Louisiana Sheet Music digitization project. There’s certainly never a shortage of things to do around here. It’s a team effort, which is why I want to thank Michael Jones of the HTML Administrative Office for his assistance with the preparation of this newsletter and why I close with my now traditional pitch for annual dues for the Friends of the Hogan Jazz Archive, \$25 payable by check to “Hogan Jazz Archive” to assist with the expense of producing the hard-copy newsletter, which is still widely in demand (1,500 per year), despite the fact that our back issues are all available now via our website.

- Bruce Boyd Raeburn



Social affair at Juenes Amis Hall. Among the musicians, l to r: Louis Cottrell, Jr., saxophone; Oscar Rouzan, saxophone; possibly Buddy Burns, bass; Sidney Pflueger, guitar. Thanks to Barry Martyn for assisting with identification of the hall and the musicians.

The GHOST of MISTER JAZZ

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JACK FROST
Music by
FRED ROSE



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